

## **Ron Jaffe**

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Date: March 1, 2016

To: CGA Housing Committee

From: Ron Jaffe

Subject: H.B. No. 5363 — Recommendation for change

Thank you to the members of the Committee:

While I am a former Board of Education member, a former Board of Finance member, and current Vice Chair of the Brookfield Democratic Town Committee, I speak to you today as a resident of Brookfield.

I do not stand here to ask you to eliminate 8-30g. I support the concept of working to expand affordable housing opportunities in towns. But we need to modify 8-30g in a way that returns control to towns who have invested significant time, energy, manpower, and funds to develop specific sections of their towns. This is not what the current revision does. But this is exactly what towns like Brookfield need.

Brookfield currently has no walkable downtown area. For years, the town talked in general terms about wanting to develop a destination-driven area at the intersection of Route 25 and Federal Road — an area we call Four Corners — that would retain the New England charm that our town cherishes. More recently, we've worked with the state and federal governments to create the Route 7 bypass — a project necessary to divert excessive commuter traffic from this intersection to allow for new shops and restaurants to flourish.

The town also spent significant time and funds developing a plan. In September 2012 the town adopted The Four Corners Brookfield Town Center Revitalization Plan, developed after months if not years of research, meetings, community input, etc. This is a comprehensive plan that lays out the town's desire to build a destination location with 3-story mixed-use buildings where the first floor would be commercial. We have proceeded with our efforts to implement this plan, taking many actions including new zoning ordinances, and the approval of a significant tax reduction for the first major developer.

Unfortunately, 8-30g gives developers free ability to circumvent the extensive plans that our town has developed, providing the town little to no control over development that it has spent so much time and capital on. We currently have a 6 or 7 story residential project proposed in the center of our Town Center area that our Zoning Commission is considering under 8-30g.

It is my firm belief that if this project goes forward it will destroy our town's ability to have the Town Center District developed in the way Brookfielders want and expect.

I strongly encourage the Committee to change the proposed language of H.B. No. 5363 to allow communities that have invested the time, organization and funding to create district revitalization plans to be able to carve out areas that would be exempt from the ability of developers to use 8-30g to go around local zoning ordinances. A carve out for Brookfield of the Town Center District with a buffer (say a half-mile around) would allow the town to proceed without the threat that a single developer could jeopardize the long term realization of the town's vision.

There will not be many towns that would qualify for this carve-out. But I doubt that Storrs Center would be as successful as it is if a developer could have used 8-30g to build a 12-story affordable housing complex directly across from the U Conn campus.

So I believe that a carve-out for towns that have done the work, spent taxpayer funds, and developed real plans is the way to address this issue. I urge you to adopt language to this effect.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Jaffe", with a stylized, flowing script.

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